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STILL STANDING

by Rebecca Ferrar



Sheila and Clayton Mhire's home in Grand Chenier, La., built with blueprints and logs from Heritage Log Homes of Sevierville, withstood 120 mph winds and a 15-foot storm surge during Hurricane Rita.

LA. COUPLE'S LOG HOME WITHSTOOD RITA; THEY WILL PRAISE SEVIERVILLE COMPANY AT HERITAGE'S NATIONAL CONVENTION THIS WEEK

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Sheila Mhire thanks God and her sturdy Heritage log house for bringing her home safely through Hurricane Rita.

The Sept. 24 storm devastated schools, churches and other homes in her Grand Chenier, La., community. But the log home built with blueprints and logs from Heritage Log Homes of Sevierville allowed the structure to withstand not only 120 mph winds but also a 15-foot storm surge.

Mhire said the home is 11.9 feet above ground.

"Everything was pretty much destroyed except our house," Mhire said. "We did not have any water in our house. We had no foundation problems. Everything is as we left it. There was massive destruction in our area. Not one electrical pole was left up, no churches, no schools, homes

were totally washed away and people don't even know where they're at."

To show their appreciation to Heritage, she and her husband, Clayton, plan to speak at the Heritage national convention in Gatlinburg this week.

The Mhires, who run a welding company, said the front stairs and some lattice work at the bottom of the home were destroyed, but that was the only damage.

"The drawings that Heritage Log Homes gave us, we built exactly like they told us, and it is a very, very good foundation," Sheila Mhire said. "We're thanking God because it's totally supernatural because there is nothing left here. It's just amazing."

The Mhire family, including their 4- and 5-year-old daughters, were forced to evacuate before the storm and stayed in a camper in Deridder, La., until Dec. 22, when they returned to their home four miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

Linda Ullian, Heritage marketing

director, attributes the strength of the home to the foundation, built with some 56 pylons, and a "Thru-Bolt" anchoring system that anchors the logs together, preventing air infiltration and settling.

"They built their house on a foundation, on a system where the steel beams go into the ground," Ullian said. Heritage Log Homes doesn't provide the actual beams but does provide the blueprints for building them.

"It anchors the house," Ullian said. "They built their log home according to our plans. They used our roof system, which anchors the roof to the house."

Roofs blow off of houses often in hurricanes, resulting in water damage, she said.

"Other houses were up on stilts and were still blown into the marshes," Ullian said. "It says incredible things for our product. We won't make the claim that we build a hurricane-proof home, but through the combined technology of our product and the fact that they did have very good plans for a foundation - they didn't even board up the windows and the windows were not blown out - their lives aren't shattered like everyone else's down there."

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Sheila & Clayton Mhire plan to speak at Heritage Log Homes' national convention in Gatlinburg this week.